

### **Amendments to the Claims:**

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Please amend/cancel/add the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A nozzle for plasma torches, ~~consisting~~ formed of a metal or a metal alloy, ~~characterized in that~~ with wear-resistant microparticles of a hard material ~~are embedded in the~~ metal or the metal alloy, at least in certain regions.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the maximum grain size of the ~~said~~ embedded microparticles is less than or equal to 30  $\mu\text{m}$ .

Claim 3 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the maximum grain size of the ~~said~~ embedded microparticles is less than or equal to 15  $\mu\text{m}$ .

Claim 4 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that ~~that the~~ said hard material is a carbide.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that ~~the~~ said hard material is silicon carbide.

Claim 6 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that ~~the~~ said hard ceramic material for the microparticles is an oxide, a carbide, a nitride or a boride or, alternatively, microparticles of at least two of ~~these chemical compounds are embedded~~ such materials.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said microparticles are in a grain size spectrum around an average grain size  $d_{50}$ , which is located in the range between 1 and 5  $\mu\text{m}$ , ~~are embedded~~.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that ~~the~~said embedded microparticles fill a volume proportion in the range between 0.5 and 15% in the nozzle material.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that ~~the~~said microparticles are embedded in the region pointing toward the inside of the nozzle.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said microparticles are embedded in the region of the nozzle opening.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said microparticles are embedded in a locally differentiated manner.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that ~~the~~said metal or metal alloy nozzle is essentially formed from copper or a copper alloy.

Claim 13 (currently amended): A method for manufacturing a nozzle for plasma cutting torches as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the nozzle is manufactured by extrusion from a metal or metal alloy powder mixture containing said microparticles.

Claim 14 (original): The method as claimed in claim 13, characterized in that the final contour of the nozzle is formed by a chip-removal machining process and/or a metal-forming process.

Claim 15 (new): The nozzle as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said hard material is a ceramic material.